4: Cross L-5 (no date) 1948 E16 Slavs E16

contemporary material and intellectual culture which culminates in their conversion to Christianity under Roman or Byzantine auspices. It likewise witnessed an expansion of trade both in Central Europe and in the Orient, and in this commercial expansion the Slavs in general had a definite stake.

Though a combined evaluation of linguistic, source, and archaeological data permits a tolerably accurate and convincing appraisal of the material culture of the Slavs during the pagan period, there is no such coherent mass of evidence upon which any wholly satisfactory statement of their religious beliefs, demonology, and eschatology may be predicted. The early Slavs cremated their dead, sharing this custom with their other Indo-European neighbors (Lithuanians, Germans, Celts). Burial was adopted through foreign influence, and before the various conversions both customs existed side by side. The primitive pagan Slavs were animists and attributed a soul to the natural elements in which they lived. They honored a supreme deity and also believed in the existence of wood, water, and household spirits to which they offered sacrifices. Beside these nature spirits, they also honored the spirits of their ancestors and thus believed in a future life. They deified the heavenly bodies and the great phenomena of nature (thunder, lightning, wind, rain, fire).

Beside these animistic and manistic beliefs, the pagan Slavs also venerated a limited number of gods, some of which were of alien origin. The organization of a veritable pantheon was carried farthest by the Western Slavs who lived along the Baltic coast, a phenomenon perhaps not unconnected with Germanic influences of early date. It is reasonably clear that all the primitive Slavs possessed a god of the thunder and lightning, though this deity, Perun, took on special importance among the Russian Slavs because of special Scandinavian influences and the importance of Thor in the Scandinavian pantheon. Among the Western Slavs, however, Perun was less dominant than the god of the shining sun, Svarog, a name apparently connected with the indo-European base **svar*, signifying "heat,

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